

## What it looks like

Heroin is a white powder, but it's usually mixed with other powders so it can be anything from off-white to brown.

## How it's taken

Heroin can be smoked or snorted. It can also be injected. To do this, it's dissolved in water and then cooked. Needles, syringes, spoons, tin foil, lighters or candles are often used.

## What it does

Heroin slows the brain, slows the heart rate and slows breathing, making users feel relaxed and drowsy.

It also causes a lack of concentration and sometimes causes feelings of anxiety and fear.

Heroin can cause blurred vision and constricted pupils. It can also make you feel sick, dizzy and very drowsy.

## Addiction

Heroin is dangerously addictive. Once the effects wear off, users want to take more and more. So it's easy to become dependent, even after trying it just a few times.



## How long the effects last

This depends on the way it's taken and how pure it is. However, users can feel drowsy for a couple of hours.

## Risks

### What are the risks of overdosing?

Overdose can lead to a coma or death, and the risks are very real. This is because the purity of street drugs varies a lot.

Heroin is mixed with all kinds of things. This means that you don't know how much you're taking, because you don't know what it's been mixed with.

Drug users can also lose track of what they've taken, or take heroin with alcohol or other drugs.

### What are the risks from injecting?

Injecting heroin can damage your veins and lead to gangrene. Sharing needles and other equipment means you can catch infections such as hepatitis B or C and HIV or AIDS.

### What are the other risks?

Using heroin during pregnancy affects your baby. The baby becomes addicted too, and suffers withdrawal symptoms after birth.

Heroin also stops the body's cough reflex working properly, creating a real risk from inhaling vomit and choking.

## What to do in an emergency

Don't delay – call 999 immediately.

If you think someone has overdosed on drugs, tell the operator what drugs they've taken (if you know).

### What not to do

- Don't cause pain or another injury.
- Don't give them other drugs.
- Don't put them in a shower or bath.
- Don't walk them around.
- Don't leave them on their own.

Always follow the operator's instructions.

And remember, if you have any doubt always call 999. It could save the person's life.

## What the law says

Heroin is a classified drug. For the current classification and information about the consequences of using and supplying heroin, go to [www.knowthescore.info](http://www.knowthescore.info).

**Fact: by law, passing drugs to someone else, including friends, is classed as supplying.**

**Fact: some countries may refuse visas to people who have drug convictions.**

## Getting more information

Phone the free and confidential 'Know the Score' information line on **0800 587 5879**, to speak to a trained advisor. Someone is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Calls from landlines are free and will not show up on the phone bill. Or, you can visit the 'Know the Score' website at [www.knowthescore.info](http://www.knowthescore.info).

Both the information line and the website can provide information about local services. Also, you can ask your GP to refer you to a specialist drugs service. To find a drug service in your area visit [www.scottishdrugservices.com](http://www.scottishdrugservices.com).

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